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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 COME-00 EB-07 NSF-02

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TO ALL OECD CAPITALS
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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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TAGS: SENV, OECD, SZ, EEC, UR, KE, GE, PL, US

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE STRATOSPHERE
AND RELATED PROBLEMS

REF: (A) STATE A-3499, (B) STATE 229503

1. ADDRESSEES ARE PROVIDED WITH THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY
INFORMATION FOR USE IN RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE INQUIRIES
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ABOUT SUBJECT CONFERENCE, WHICH WAS A SIGNIFICANT CHAPTER
IN THE CONTINUING FLUOROCARBON-OZONE STORY. WHEN THE
FORMAL REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE IS AVAILABLE, IT WILL
BE POUCHED TO INTERESTED PARTIES.

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2. (READERS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AND/OR REGULATORY ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE CAN SKIP TO PARAS 11-15 BELOW.)

3. CONFERENCE, HELD SEPTEMBER 15-17 AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY IN LOGAN, UTAH, WAS SPONSORED BY SEVEN U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS, WITH ARRANGEMENTS PRIMARILY MADE BY NASA. IT INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES FROM MANY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, AS WELL AS A MYRIAD OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. CLOSE TO 300 SCIENTISTS, ADMINISTRATORS, OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,

INDUSTRY AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED. ATTENDANCE INCLUDED SIZABLE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM ABROAD, INCLUDING THE UK, CANADA, JAPAN, FRG, FRANCE, BELGIUM, NORWAY (LYKKE).

4. AGENDA CONSISTED OF FOLLOWING: STRATOSPHERIC AND LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS, SOURCES FOR AND ATMOSPHERIC BUDGET OF N20 AND NOX, SOURCES FOR AND ATMOSPHERIC BUDGET OF HALOGENS, SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY-- DYNAMICS OF DECISION MAKING ON THE STRATOSPHERE.

5. IN LAYMAN'S TERMS, CONFERENCE CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE GENERAL SUBJECTS: STATUS OF SCIENTIFIC MODELING/ MEASUREMENT/ANALYSIS OF THE STRATOSPHERE AND CHEMICAL REACTIONS THEREIN; THE JUST-RELEASED NAS REPORTS (SEE STATE 229503); AND THE GENERAL ISSUE OF PUBLIC DECISION MAKING IN THE FACE OF SCIENTIFIC UNCERTAINTY, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE FLUOROCARBON-OZONE PROBLEM.

6. ON THE FIRST POINT, LITTLE WAS ADDED TO THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN GREAT DETAIL IN THE SCIENTIFIC PART OF THE NAS REPORT (THE SO-CALLED "GUTOWSKY PANEL" REPORT). IN ROUGH AND VERY SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY, THE SITUATION IS THAT THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT CHLORO-

FLUOROMETHANES (CFMS, OF WHICH FLUOROCARBONS 11 AND 12 ARE THE TWO OF MOST CURRENT INTEREST) CAN REACT WITH OZONE, CAUSING ITS DESTRUCTION. SIGNIFICANT UNCERTAINTIES STILL EXIST ABOUT THE RATE AT WHICH THIS CAN/DOES TAKE PLACE. HOWEVER, CURRENT THINKING (NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DISSENT) HOVERS IN THE 7-10 PERCENT RANGE FOR ULTIMATE OZONE DEPLETION, AT CONTINUING 1973 EMISSION RATES.

7. THE ISSUE OF CHLORINE NITRATE "SINK" IN THE STRATOSPHERE WHICH WOULD PARTIALLY NEUTRALIZE THE FLUOROCARBON-OZONE REACTION BY REMOVING SOME OF THE FREE CHLORINE IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION. RECENT RESULTS INDICATE,

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HOWEVER, THAT THE EFFECT OF ANY SUCH SINK WOULD AT MOST BE TO MITIGATE OZONE DEPLETION, NOT COMPLETELY COUNTERACT IT. (IN SOME SCIENTISTS' VIEW, THE CHLORINE NITRATE SINK REMAINS BASICALLY A RED HERRING AND AT MOST WILL TURN OUT TO HAVE VERY LITTLE EFFECT.) CONCERNING POSSIBLE SINKS FOR FLUOROCARBONS AT LOWER ALTITUDES, EVIDENCE IS MOUNTING THAT THERE ARE PROBABLY NONE OF SIGNIFICANCE. THIS MEANS THAT IT IS BECOMING MORE CERTAIN THAT MOST FLUOROCARBONS RELEASED BY MAN EVENTUALLY WILL REACT WITH OZONE.

8. LITTLE TIME WAS DEVOTED AT THE CONFERENCE TO THE ISSUE OF EFFECTS OF OZONE DEPLETION. THE SITUATION REMAINS BASICALLY AS DESCRIBED IN THE NAS REPORTS. SPECIFICALLY, THE ACCUMULATION OF FLUOROCARBONS IN THE ATMOSPHERE INCREASES THE ABSORPTION AND EMISSION OF INFRARED RADIATION, THUS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SO-CALLED "GREENHOUSE EFFECT". ALSO, INDIRECT CLIMATIC EFFECTS OF UNCERTAIN DIRECTION AND MAGNITUDE ARE EXPECTED TO OCCUR FROM A COMBINATION OF TEMPERATURE CHANGES IN THE AIR COLUMN PRECIPITATED BY OZONE DEPLETION. LASTLY, OZONE DEPLETION LEADS TO INCREASED ULTRA-VIOLET RADIATION FALLING ON EARTH, AND THERE ARE FAIRLY GOOD CORRELATIONS DEVELOPING BETWEEN SKIN CANCER (BOTH NON-MALIGNANT AND MALIGNANT) AND UV RADIATION. LESS SHARP, BUT ANTICIPATED CORRELATIONS ALSO EXIST BETWEEN INCREASED UV RADIATION AND A VARIETY OF NON-HUMAN BIOLOGICAL, AND AGRICULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS.
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9. QUESTION OF POSSIBLE IMPACT ON OZONE LAYER FROM USE OF NITROGEN FERTILIZER ALSO RECEIVED ATTENTION, ALTHOUGH BULK OF TIME SPENT ON CFM ISSUE. IN RELATION TO THE NITROUS OXIDE ISSUE, WHILE ONE OR MORE SCIENTISTS ARGUE THAT A MAJOR PROBLEM CLEARLY EXISTS, GENERAL CONSENSUS WAS THAT CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE IS VERY MEAGER, AND THAT WHILE THERE CLEARLY IS A POTENTIAL FOR A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM, (1) IT IS NOT AS URGENT TO "SOLVE" AS THE FLUOROCARBON ONE, AND (2) A GREAT DEAL MORE WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE IN THE LABORATORY AND FIELD BEFORE REASONED DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM CAN BE CONDUCTED.

10. CONCERNING THE NAS REPORTS THEMSELVES, THERE WAS LITTLE ARGUMENT WITH OR CRITICISM OF THE SCIENTIFIC (GUTOWSKY) REPORT. THE SO-CALLED "TUKEY" REPORT, WHICH CONTAINED THE ACTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS (SOME OF WHICH WERE QUOTED IN STATE 229503), RECEIVED A GREAT DEAL MORE ATTENTION. MOST OF THE DEBATE REVOLVED AROUND TWO NON-SCIENTIFIC ISSUES: WHETHER THE TUKEY COMMITTEE (AND THE SPONSORING NAS) SHOULD EVEN HAVE MADE ANY "NON-SCIENTIFIC" RECOMMENDATIONS (I.E., CONCERNING

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TIMING AND NATURE OF POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON FLUORO-
CARBONS); AND, EVEN IF IT WERE PROPER, WHAT THE APPRO-
PRIATE TIMING FOR CONSIDERING AND IMPLEMENTING SUCH
RESTRICTIONS ACTUALLY WAS.

11. THE QUESTION OF NEED FOR AND TIMING OF POSSIBLE
REGULATIONS RECEIVED LIVELY COVERAGE IN THE THIRD
("SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY") PART OF THE CONFERENCE.
MANY SCIENTISTS SUPPORTED A VIEW THAT NO ACTION SHOULD
BE TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT REGULATORS UNTIL A GREAT DEAL
MORE VERIFYING SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION HAS BEEN COLLECTED

TO REDUCE UNCERTAINTIES. MANY INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES
SUPPORTED THIS VIEW. HOWEVER, OTHERS, INCLUDING SOME
GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES, ARGUED THAT THE COMBINATION
OF THE EXISTING EVIDENCE AND THE SMALL LIKELIHOOD OF
CONTRARY INFORMATION EVOLVING IN THE COMING MONTHS
JUSTIFIES IMMEDIATE INITIATION OF THE REGULATORY PROCESS.
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DR. PETERSON, OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENT'S
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (CEQ), AND DR. PITTLE,
A COMMISSIONER OF THE CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION,
STRONGLY SUPPORTED THIS POSITION. IN OVER-SIMPLIFIED
TERMS, THEIR ARGUMENT WAS THAT CHEMICALS ARE NOT INNOCENT
UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY, THAT GOVERNMENTS MUST OFTEN MAKE
REGULATORY DECISIONS BASED ON FAR LESS THAN COMPLETE
FACTS, AND THAT THE PUBLIC INTEREST (INCLUDING THE
HEALTH OF FUTURE GENERATIONS) AND SAFETY ARE MAJOR,
ALBEIT UNQUANTIFIABLE, FACTORS IN THE COST-BENEFIT AND
RISK-BENEFIT EQUATIONS, FACTORS WHICH SCIENTISTS ARE
NO MORE QUALIFIED TO ADDRESS THAN ANYONE ELSE. THEY
AND OTHERS ALSO POINTED TO THE LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED
FOR THE RULE MAKING PROCESS AS A REASON FOR BEGINNING
SOON.

12. DR. PETERSON URGED THAT CONSUMERS VOLUNTARILY
CEASE USING THOSE AEROSOL PRODUCTS WHICH USE FLUORO-
CARBONS AS PROPELLANTS (MAINLY HAIR SPRAYS AND UNDERARM
DEODORANTS), AND THAT THE PRODUCERS VOLUNTARILY START
REPLACING SUCH PROPELLANTS WITH SUBSTITUTES (OR ALTERNA-
TIVE MEANS OF APPLICATION). HE SAID THAT HE WOULD
RECOMMEND TO THE PRESIDENT THAT APPROPRIATE USG REGULA-
TORY ACTION AGAINST AT LEAST THE "LEAST ESSENTIAL"
USES OF FLUOROCARBONS BE INITIATED FORTHWITH.

13. (NB: AT PRESENT THE DOMESTIC LEGAL FOUNDATION FOR
REGULATION OF FLUOROCARBONS IS CONFUSED AT BEST,
WITH SOME USES APPARENTLY NOT AMENABLE TO REGULATION
AT ALL. THIS MAY CHANGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, HOWEVER,
AS POSSIBLE ENACTMENT OF A TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL
ACT AND/OR AMENDMENTS TO THE CLEAN AIR ACT WOULD

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GIVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY BROAD
AUTHORITY TO REGULATE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES IN GENERAL
AND/OR FLUOROCARBONS SPECIFICALLY. WHAT ACTION EPA,
THE CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, THE FOOD AND
DRUG ADMINISTRATION, OR ANY OTHER AGENCY MAY TAKE IN
THE FUTURE VIS A VIS FLUOROCARBONS IS NOT RPT NOT
KNOWN AT THIS TIME.)

14. INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS: AS SENATOR MOSS NOTED
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IN OPENING THE CONFERENCE AND AS NO ONE DISPUTED DURING
THE CONFERENCE, REGARDLESS OF HOW ONE VIEWS THE ISSUE,
IT IS A GLOBAL ONE. THE QUESTION OF INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION IN AND COORDINATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
WAS NOT DISCUSSED AT ANY LENGTH, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A
DETAILED REPORT GIVEN TO THE CONFERENCE ON THE RECENT
DRESDEN SYMPOSIUM. REFERENCES WERE MADE TO WMO, UNEP,
ETC., BUT ONGOING PROGRAMS ARE PRESUMABLY ALREADY
APPROPRIATELY INTERCONNECTED INTERNATIONALLY--INFORMALLY
AT LEAST--AND FUTURE WORK WILL HOPEFULLY BE COORDINATED
AND RATIONALIZED VIA THE UPCOMING UNEP CONFERENCE, TO BE
HELD IN WASHINGTON NEXT FEBRUARY (STATE 219195).

15. ON THE REGULATORY SIDE, THERE WAS ALSO NO IN-DEPTH
DISCUSSION OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES. NEVERTHELESS, THE
CONFERENCE HEARD JAMES BRYDON OF THE CANADIAN ENVIRON-
MENTAL PROTECTION SERVICE DISCUSS THE OECD WORK
PROGRAM AND REFER TO THE HANDLING OF PCBS AS A USEFUL
PRECEDENT. ERIK LYKKE OF THE NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF THE ENVIRONMENT EMPHASIZED THE INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
OF THE ISSUE AND NOTED THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE THE
U.S. WHICH WOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THE FIELD OF
REGULATION (BUT THAT OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING NORWAY,
WOULD MOST LIKELY QUICKLY FOLLOW ANY LEAD TAKEN BY THE
U.S.). HE ARGUED THAT FOR THE LONG-RUN PROTECTION OF
THE STRATOSPHERE FROM THREATS SUCH AS FLUOROCARBONS,
EMISSIONS FROM SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT, POSSIBLE IMPACTS
FROM FERTILIZERS, ETC., IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO BEGIN
IMMEDIATELY TO DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION,
PERHAPS AKIN TO THE 1972 OCEAN DUMPING CONVENTION. HE
INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT NATIONAL REGULATORY ACTIONS
SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR SUCH A CONVENTION TO BE ESTABLISHED,
WHICH WOULD PROBABLY TAKE SEVERAL YEARS. KISSINGER

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